



April 20, 2022

Dear Town Meeting,

We are writing to express our support for Warrant Article 8, which would establish a Civilian Police Advisory Commission in the Town of Arlington.

We believe that the creation of a Civilian Police Advisory Commission holds the potential to be a powerful tool to build trust between Arlington's LGBTQIA+ residents and the Arlington Police Department (APD).

Arlington's LGBTQIA+ population reflects [that of Massachusetts's](#), which is diverse and disproportionately young. A [2018 report](#) by The Boston Foundation and The Fenway Institute at Fenway Health found that 10 percent of 25 to 34-year-olds in Massachusetts identify as LGBTQIA+. The percentage is even greater—nearly 16 percent—among 18 to 24-year-olds.

It is vitally important that APD services are available for all town residents, including those who are LGBTQIA+. Unfortunately, LGBTQIA+ people and transgender people in particular [consistently report](#) experiencing negative interactions with law enforcement officers and the criminal justice system.

A [2015 survey of transgender people in Massachusetts](#) found that over half (52%) reported being “verbally harassed, repeatedly referred to as the wrong gender, physically assaulted, or sexually assaulted, including being forced by officers to engage in sexual activity to avoid arrest” during their encounters with law enforcement.

Consequently, many gender diverse people, including those who reside in Arlington, are extremely reluctant to initiate interaction with police officers, even when they have been the victim of violent crime.

In 2020 and 2021, the LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission collaborated with APD on a project to improve APD's ability to respond in culturally appropriate ways to transgender people who have reported a crime, been involved in a motor vehicle accident, or are suspected of having committed a crime. Working with two nationally-recognized experts in health, law, and public policy affecting transgender people, we offered suggestions for updating APD's policy on interacting with transgender and gender diverse individuals.

The policy was updated and officers received training. During our March 17, 2022 meeting, Lt. Greg Flavin of APD reported back to the Rainbow Commission about how the new policy was being implemented.

We believe that this example of collaborating toward the shared goal of improving the quality of service for LGBTQIA+ residents can serve as a model for the new Civilian Police Advisory Commission. By organizing such efforts under one Commission dedicated to improving trust among residents and police, we believe that opportunities for improving the experiences that residents who belong to historically marginalized groups have with police will be more readily identified and that potential solutions will be more swiftly implemented.

The LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission voted unanimously to endorse Warrant Article 8 and we respectfully request that you vote to support it.

Lisa Krinsky and Susan Ryan-Vollmar  
Co-Chairs, LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission on behalf of the full LGBTQIA+ Rainbow Commission